

Saint Francis of Assisi

FATHER CUTHBERT, O.S.F.

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WITH a world-wide enthusiasm the seven hundredth anniversary of the death of St. Francis will this year be commemorated. He died at sunset on October 3, 1226, as he lay stretched on the bare ground, listening to the reading of the Gospel story of the death of his Divine Master on the bare wood of the cross. In his life he had sought to live as literally as he might the life of Christ on earth: in his death he sought as nearly as he might to die like Christ. Already his body was marked with the five wounds of His crucified Lord, as for many years his soul had suffered in union with Our Lord the redeeming love wherein mankind is saved. His wounded body lay upon the bare ground as his soul went forth: and yet about his death there was none of the tragedy of Calvary. That great sorrow Francis had already shared in spirit and body: but the sorrow of Calvary had been succeeded by the joy of the Easter morn before the saint actually went to meet his Lord in glory: and the death of Francis was joyous as a marriage day: it was his ascension day. For months before his death—when he knew that death was approaching—his waiting soul uttered itself in joyous song. To one who was scandalized that he should await death so merrily, Francis replied: "Why should I not be merry in God, seeing that by God's grace I am so united with my Lord that I cannot but be glad." And so it was that he welcomed "Sister Death" as the unveiling of the great joyous mystery of the eternal union with Christ for which his soul hungered. Through death he would come face to face with the Lord, to Whom his whole being was already indissolubly wedded. Of this indissoluble union Francis had received divine assurance that day when in the joyousness of the assurance he composed his Canticle of Brother Sun: from that moment his soul passed out of

the shadow of Calvary into the light of the Eastern morn. There have been many saints who have awaited death with longing; but few who have awaited it so merrily.

Joyousness was indeed a note of St. Francis' whole life—though he had his "black night of the soul" when his spirit was tried and purified as it were by fire. It was his natural temperament which he carried over into the service of Jesus Christ; and, as he would argue, why should not one be joyous in Christ's service, seeing that the love of Christ is the most precious and soul-satisfying thing in life? His was the joyousness of a man in possession of a great love: and love was the very breath of life to St. Francis. He loved all things in heaven and on earth. He looked out on the earth and peered into the mysteries of heaven with the eyes of love. That was indeed the great secret of his power with men—and with the beasts and the birds and all living things. It was, too, the secret of his wonderful union with God in Christ.

Commonly the virtue attributed characteristically to St. Francis is the virtue of Poverty. The espousal of St. Francis and Poverty has been the theme of poets and of painters: and is he not generally known as "the Poor Man of Assisi"? But when we speak of the poverty of St. Francis it is well to realize what poverty meant to the saint and why he became so enamored of it. To him poverty was a sort of sacramental sign of a noble and sacred life, and in speaking of poverty in relation to St. Francis one must always bear in mind that nobler and exalted life to which it was for him the road and means. Apart from that nobler life, poverty would have had no value in the eyes of St. Francis. Mere poverty as such is not Franciscan poverty.

What then did Francis see in poverty? or, in other words, why did he value it?

To answer that question adequately one would needs relate the whole life story of St. Francis from the time of his conversion from the service of the world to the service of God: for his dedicated life was an evergrowing realization of the ideal which at first drew him to throw aside wealth and social position and to embrace the beggar's lot.

That ideal was one of service—not service for the sake of material gain or social self-preferment; but of service

given disinterestedly for the sake of the glory or nobility of the service given and the benefit it would bring to others. It was the ideal of chivalry which, in the romance literature with which the saint was familiar, sent the knight forth to perform deeds of valor for the succor of the distressed or for some righteous cause, with no thought of other reward than the valiant deed itself. St. Francis' first essay in the serious business of manhood was to join the Papal army in the hope of gaining his knighthood in the war against the imperial usurper. But his career was speedily cut short by an attack of fever, during which he had a spiritual experience which turned his ambition from a secular to a spiritual knighthood. He must now dedicate himself as a liege servant of God in the spirit of chivalric knighthood: uphold the honor of his sovereign Lord, succor the distressed and do all knightly service as his Lord should command. In this ideal of knightly service Francis was brought into direct opposition with the spirit which ruled his class and the civic commune. Here commercialism and social ambition reigned supreme with its attendant vices of avarice, petty jealousies, class and party rivalries and the insincerities which mould men's lives when they are seeking their own advancement. Against all these the chivalric soul of Francis revolted. He had thought to cut himself off from them when he joined the Papal army. In a different way he must cut himself off from them now in the service of God. He must free himself of all that would curtail his freedom to serve God and his fellow men without temporal or material gain to himself. Gradually it dawned on him that to gain this freedom he must renounce wealth and social position and become as the very poor, even as the beggar. At first his soul revolted against the thought of poverty: he knew it only in the degradation of the very poor as evidenced in their material, physical and mental conditions. His emancipation from this dread came on a day when in a moment of spiritual enlightenment he saw a human and Christian brother in a poor leper. Then pity broke down the estrangement of class and swept away the fastidiousness which withheld him from the poor leper's embrace. When shortly after this his father disinherited him, Francis welcomed his freedom gladly. Now he was free to serve as his heart desired with the service of a disinter-

ested love which made him the servant of all. And in that moment Francis realized as he had not before his kinship with humanity. He was no longer a member of a class: he belonged to no class but to all men. "Now I can say," he cried, "Our Father, Who art in heaven." He now became the servant of all men in the spirit of brotherhood—of the beggar as of the noble; of the workingman as of the wealthy citizen. For Francis, it may be well to remark, become poor not to fetter himself in his service by adopting any class antagonism, but to be free from the vices or temptations which the class spirit breeds. He became poor, if one may so express it, in order to become a man, and to do a man's service in the spirit of purest chivalry.

One must never dis sever the spirit of chivalric service from the poverty of St. Francis if one is to understand the "Holy Poverty" of the Franciscan life. In truth the whole conception of Franciscan life—as lived by St. Francis—is transfused with the ideals and spirit of chivalry. If the chivalric literature of the Middle Ages had no other claim upon our gratitude we should be grateful to it for its part in the formation of the life of Francis and his Order. And therefore with a right instinct did Francis speak of his ideal poverty as of something noble in its lineage: to him poverty of his ideal was "My Lady Poverty": she might be poor but she was a poor lady, lacking material goods and comforts yet with the noble mind and purpose, the noblest, as Francis held, that men can have: for what is nobler than disinterested service given in a pure love of God and one's fellow men?

With this vision before him of a noble poverty dedicated to the service of God and man, Francis, seeking leadership and guidance, found what he sought in the Gospel story of Our Lord's life on earth. He had enlisted himself—or rather we should say, been enlisted—in the service of God; and into that service he brought his knightly ideal of service: and as he pondered upon what God wanted of him, gradually there arose before him the figure of the Divine Redeemer in His earthly life and labors as the law upon which his own life and labors must be moulded. With avidity his soul seized on the fact that Christ in His earthly life was poor and that He labored for our salvation out of pure love. Here in Our Divine

Lord was his ideal realized: and so it was that Christ in His Poverty and Humility and His Divine pitiful love and hard labors for man, became to Francis the living law of life, to whom he vowed a special allegiance as a liege man to his lord. Henceforth, and more and more as the days went on, Francis sought to mould his life on the model of Christ as revealed in the Gospel: and to him the Gospel became his veritable rule to be observed "simply and without gloss"—as literally as possible. Yet it was not the written words but rather the divine Personality they revealed which held the allegiance of Francis. For again the knightly ideal of the chivalric romance shows itself: in just the same spirit as the ideal knight followed his liege lord with a simple unquestioning devotion and moulded himself on his lord's example, so did Francis set himself to follow Christ. And so successfully did he achieve this ideal, that few even amongst the saints have appeared to men so Christlike. In the story of St. Francis and his early friars one is taken back in spirit into the atmosphere of the Gospel story. To the disciples of St. Francis, and those who witnessed their lives, Umbria seemed for a while as another Galilee and Judea, so vividly did the early Franciscan life recall the story and spirit of the days when Christ walked on earth. That was indeed the wonderful thing about St. Francis and his disciples, that at a time when the Christian world had wandered far from the spirit of Christ and when even religion itself had become so largely secularized, these simple friars could recall as out of the dim past the simplicity and warmth of the first Christian days. It is true that before Francis there were many who protested against the worldliness in the Church and called for a return to the poverty of Christ and the Apostles; but these were mostly heretics, and by them the evangelical life was presented with a harshness of criticism and denunciation utterly foreign to the Gospel spirit. Francis preached and practiced evangelical poverty: but in him poverty was, in truth, the garb of Christ and shone with Christ's infinite love and mercy towards men. That was the difference between the Franciscans and such heretics as the Vaudois. The Vaudois had the letter of the law: Francis and his disciples had the vision and the spirit which lay behind the letter. And so when Francis sang the praises of his Lady Poverty it was with

his eyes fixed on the vision of the Life Beautiful revealed in the Person of Our Lord, which poverty opened out to him.

Poverty, then, to St. Francis meant the freedom to serve all men for love; it also meant the freedom to walk with Christ on earth in all simplicity.

Not all at once did Francis realize what this freedom meant to him: the full realization came gradually as he lived his life in faithful allegiance to the ideal to which he was wedded. It had its ultimate flowering so far as his early life is concerned in his reception of the Stigmata and in his glorious song in praise of God's Creatures—the "Canticle of the Sun." The Stigmata—the marking of his body with the five wounds of Christ—put the visible seal upon a life which had grown so intimately into union with Christ in His earthly life and which had absorbed into itself in so remarkable a degree the spirit and mystery of the Divine Redeemer. From the time of his conversion he had sought hungrily to conform himself inwardly and outwardly to the life of Christ on earth: that life, as we have said, was his one supreme rule. He had ever sought to be as another Christ in His love-longing for His Divine Master.

In receiving the Stigmata Francis entered more fully into an actual experience of the Passion and death of Christ. Alvernia was in some sense his Calvary and in an exalted sense that day he received the Stigmata Francis died to the world to live with Christ, suffering in that death the pains of Christ in body and in soul.

The "Canticle of the Sun," which he composed some little time after this, is the joyous expression of a new life in God which came to him out of his entire union with Christ in the mystery of His redeeming love. Francis had always had a poet's love for the visible world. As he grew in the spiritual life the visible world became yet more sacred to him inasmuch as it came to symbolize to him the great mysteries of faith: and so unlike many other saints, Francis did not shun the visible creation in seeking his union with the invisible world: rather he looked upon creation as a book in which God reveals Himself to man. Yet it was not until after he had suffered the spiritual experience of the Stigmata, that the full realization of the quasi-sacramental value of the

visible world came to him and he saw clearly God's Kingdom in the works of His hands. In that clearer realization and understanding, all God's creatures became to him at once a revelation of God and the messengers of God's love to man: and in that moment too he realized with a clear understanding the sacredness of all created life. It was in the joy and gratitude of that moment that he uttered the "Canticle of the Sun" which, though crude in form, breathed a new spirit of poetry into the religious attitude of the Middle Ages towards the visible creation. No longer was the visible world a mere symbol of the invisible, but its outward expression, alive with the life which comes from God and sealed with God's message to those who can read.

The "Canticle of the Sun" together with the Stigmata express the mystical soul of Francis at its highest development. They determine for us the character and goal of that freedom which Francis gained in his love of poverty.

It will be evident then that St. Francis' message to the world cannot be expressed merely by the word "Poverty." It is true Francis loved poverty and would have all men love it: though he had no fanatical discontent with wealth in itself, nor had he any criticism for those who had wealth, provided they used it as a trust put into their hands by God's Providence. But Francis loved poverty as a road to a freedom of soul in which he could more easily and simply find what his soul longed for—a union by love with God and man and all things created. And this, in fact, is the ultimate and sovereign fact in his life. In truth, in his preaching to the world at large—apart from his own immediate disciples—Francis but incidently preached poverty: what he did preach was the law of that divine love wherein men are made one with God and with their fellow men: this was his insistent theme. It is a theme which at all times needs to be preached upon, for Christian charity, as it is the ultimate and sovereign law of the Christian life, is yet the law most open to equivocation and limitation in the minds of those who profess to accept it: and therefore it is that there are so few perfect or whole-hearted Christians in the world. So few men realize the all-embracing obligation of the law in the Christian life.

In St. Francis' own day the Christian world was a seething cauldron of political, civic and social rivalries and feuds. There was much of what is called "private charity," at least amongst the more devout. But the general public and social life of the time was mostly a negation of the supreme law of the Gospel and it was mainly due to this that the faith of the people at large had become formal and lifeless. It was amidst this lack and ignorance of Christian charity that Francis appeared aflame with his simple love of God and man, insisting that without neighborly charity no man can love God and no people be worthy of the name of Christian. In the midst of a civic feud he would enter between the combatants, reminding them that theirs was a fratricidal war and an insult to God, their common heavenly Father. He was ever urging men to recognize their brotherhood as men created by God and as Christians redeemed by Christ, "the Divine Brother of all mankind." Before the claims of this brotherhood all selfish interests must give way. Charity in all the relations of men with each other, whether in public or in private, was for Francis the test between belief and unbelief, at least in practice. From this point of view it was that he denounced so vigorously the avarice and money-seeking which were so prevalent in the new social order of the thirteenth century dominated by the trading communes. Here he knew were the seeds of those dissensions between the various communes which made Italy a constant battle field. And it was in a peculiar sense that he set his own loved poverty against the prevalent greed and avarice, as a call to men to set Christian love against self-seeking. Voluntary poverty was the negation of that radical evil—the lust for material gain and social dominance by which charity is commonly stunted or destroyed amongst those who profess the Gospel.

It is then, with a true instinct that in the language of the Church Francis is styled pre-eminently not "the poor Francis" but "the seraphic Francis" because of that burning charity which moulded and formed his life and sent him forth the apostle of divine love amongst men.

As such his appeal is not only to one age, but to all ages as long as Christianity endures. For as we have

said, the fulfillment of Christian charity is the last of the attainments of the Christian peoples—at least in the all-embracing scope of its obligation. Else would there be wars, and strifes and dissensions between Christians as there are? And—what is more significant—would these things be regarded with the easy conscience with which they commonly are regarded? No: St. Francis is needed to-day as in his own day, to remind us of the supreme and all-embracing obligation of that charity which Jesus Christ came to cast over the world for the healing of the world's sin. And if in this centenary year the peoples are brought to listen a little more seriously to this message of his, it will be for the world's good. Only in Christian charity can the world be saved.

Mussolini's Tribute

Reprinted from the "Month," Auckland

THIS year occurs the Seventh Centenary of the death of St. Francis of Assisi. Naturally the Franciscans and the Church in general are making great preparations to celebrate the glorious event, but what is of particular interest is the fact that the Italian Government has just addressed a special note to its representatives abroad. The text of this message is signed by Mussolini himself and is very worthy of notice. It is true that he takes an intensely national view of the Saint, and exalts him as being pre-eminently and primarily a glory of Italy.

The message of Mussolini is as follows:

The highest genius of poetry, in the person of Dante; the most daring navigator of the ocean, in the person of Columbus; the profoundest mind to arts and sciences, in the person of Leonardo—such have been the gifts of Italy. But in the person of St. Francis, Italy has also given to Christianity and mankind, the holiest of the Saints. For together with height of genius and depth of character, there is in our people simplicity of spirit, zeal for the conquest of the ideal, and, when need occurs, the virtue of renunciation and of sacrifice.

And so in the Saint of Assisi, the first in time of those great men, Italy, herself still involved in the rude

travails of the Middle Ages, reveals as we may say the first signs of her rebirth and affirms the renewal of her qualities of gentle courtesy and humaneness. St. Francis, formerly a participant in inter-city strife, suddenly as if divinized, lifts himself above the flaming tides of the passions of the age, raising with the Cross in his wasted hand, the glorious emblems of charity and of peace. Restorer of the religion of Christ, He is also one of our first poets and certainly the first who gives to our early poetry a characteristic, profound, and universal content. In the language in which a century later Dante will write his comedy, he, the Saint of Poverty, composes the Song of the Creatures.

The fervor of the Apostles revives, sudden and overwhelming, in his Italian soul, which shuns repose and spurns the bounds of its own country as too narrow for its desires of spending itself.

The ship which carries eastward the herald of the immortal doctrine, gladly carries on its unerring prow the destiny of the race which returns on the path of its Fathers. And the followers of the Saint, who after him set their faces towards the Levant, were at once missionaries of Christ and missionaries of the Italian spirit. In the meantime, above the venerated tomb on the slopes of Subasio, which were illuminated with a light which knows no setting, nascent Italian art in a magic burst of creative power hastened to erect the temple of all the most inspiring beauty. Thus arose Franciscan activity and art which, marked with Italian forms, sent forth its rays throughout the world. And wherever to-day, in all the countries of every continent, is seen the splendor of institutions built or the humility of sufferings borne in the name of the Saint, there is the hallmark of our country.

In 1926, it will be seven hundred years since the death of St. Francis, and Italy, with a new soul, more than ever prompt to hear him, reverts to the memory of her sublime restorer. Let Italians abroad, who prepare to honor him in their imposing assemblies in sanctuaries and in schools, in societies, and in the homes of charity, be proud to be able to associate with their magnificent ceremonies, the celebration of Italy, whence rose upon the world so marvelous an aurora.

Canticle of the Sun

ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI

MOST high omnipotent, good Lord,
Thine are praise, glory and honor and all benediction,
To Thee alone, Most High, do they belong :
And no man is there, worthy Thee to Name.
Praise be to Thee, my Lord, with all Thy creatures,
Chiefest of all, Sir Brother Sun
Who is our day, through whom Thou givest light :
Beautiful is he ; radiant, with great splendor :
Of Thee, Most High, he is a true revealer.
Praise be to Thee, my Lord, for Sister Moon and for
the stars ;
In heaven hast Thou formed them, bright, precious and
fair.
Praise be to Thee, my Lord, for Brother Wind and
for the air and for the cloud, for clear sky and all
weathers,
By which Thou givest nourishment to all Thy creatures.
Praise be to Thee, my Lord, for Sister Water ; she
Most useful is, and humble, precious and pure.
Praise be to Thee, My Lord, for Brother Fire ; by
whom
Thou lightest up the night :
And fair is he and merry, mighty and strong.
Praise be to Thee, my Lord, for our Sister, Mother
Earth,
The which sustains and keeps us :
She brings forth diverse fruits, the many-hued flowers
and grass.
O Creatures all ! praise and bless my Lord, and grateful be,
And serve Him with deep humility.

The Eucharist and Childhood

HON. DAVID I. WALSH

An address delivered at the Eucharistic Congress, Chicago

*Your Eminence, The Papal Legate, Your Eminences,
Most Reverend and Right Reverend Members of the
Hierarchy, Reverend Clergy, and Brethren in Christ:*

In the refectory of an educational institution in Europe is a large painting covering its walls.

In the center, heavenly Paradise is depicted with seven streams symbolic of the Sacraments flowing from the throne of the Lamb, watering the garden of the Church; numberless beautiful flowers growing everywhere, and the lambs of the flock of Christ feeding within the protected garden, while without the ferocious wolves are prowling, endeavoring to enter and to work havoc among the chosen flock.

Surely a beautiful symbol, and most appropriate for a school. Is the school not the veritable Paradise of God, where His lambs are protected and nourished? *Flowers and lambs*, are they not fit symbols of Christian children?

We do not say that other religious groups have no natural affection for children—but we unhesitatingly maintain that of all religious denominations the Catholic Church shows a more practical love for children than any other. She, and may we not say with justifiable pride that she alone, is thoroughly consistent in her attitude towards childhood? She directs the whole of her educational activity to one great end,—to lead Little Ones to Christ. This is the very essence, the "*raison d'être*" of her schools; it is the philosophy of Catholic education, so often misunderstood and misrepresented. She wants religious schools, not to be obstinate or intolerant, as some of her critics allege, but because she believes "it is not enough for children to be taught religion at fixed hours, but *all* their training must be permeated by fixed religious principles."

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECTS ON YOUTH

I do not purpose to discuss the strictly theological phases of this great question; that I leave to the theologians. They will tell you of the mysterious and wonderful effects of this Sacrament on the soul of the child. As a layman, I wish to dwell on another phase of this Sacrament. May I be permitted to discuss it under the title "The Psychology of the Effects of the Blessed Eucharist on Childhood"?

Psychology occupies a foremost place in modern philosophy. It is popularized to-day more than ever. Unfortunately, much of it is psychology without a psyche, *i. e.*, without a soul. But there is also a true, may I not say sacred, psychology, which deals with the relation of the supernatural and the natural in the human soul.

I am compelled to admit that the subject, the psychology of the Blessed Sacrament in its relation to childhood, is a most profound and difficult one. Yet it is worth while to endeavor to bring to light the hidden treasures. Here we may apply the words of the great angelic Doctor of the Church, St. Thomas, who was not only the Theologian, but also the Poet of the Eucharist. He says in his great Eucharistic hymn, the celebrated LAUDA SION, that here: "*Latent res eximiae.*" "Things deep and rare lie hidden here." Perhaps wonderful truths concerning the relation of the Eucharist to Childhood!

THE PREPARATORY CONSECRATION OF YOUTH

Eucharistic blessings prepare the very entrance of the Catholic child into the world. Perhaps that statement causes some astonishment. Well, may it not be one of those things "deep and rare that lie hidden here"? According to Catholic teaching, Christian marriage is a sacrament. To impress the faithful with its greatness and sacredness, the Church has surrounded it with holy and beautiful ceremonies. The young couple are urged to join hands for the united journey of life, in the Church, in the presence of their Eucharistic Lord. She has a special Nuptial Mass, with most touching prayers and blessings. She wishes the bridal pair to receive this Sacrament in

Holy Mass and together receive Holy Communion. This is to be their most precious wedding present; Christ's special Eucharistic blessing for themselves and their future offspring. At the very inception of family life, the *preparatory consecration of childhood*.

Sometimes later the Catholic spouse with deep gratitude to God realizes that she has received a wonderful favor and blessing of heaven; she is to become a mother. When, during that period, the Catholic mother kneels before the altar in Mass, when silently and alone she receives or makes a visit to the Blessed Sacrament, what will be her fervent prayers? She and her faithful husband will daily implore the blessings of the Eucharistic Lord for their child.

Pre-natal influences. A difficult and mysterious subject! Perhaps we need not, cannot deny all—What blessed influences on the unborn child, from the pious thoughts and fervent prayers before the Blessed Sacrament of such a mother! God alone knows their far-reaching influence! And those thoughts and prayers will continue ever after. Children, precious gifts from God! That is the teaching of the Church. Does not this thought intensify the parental love?

A devout Catholic mother will bring her child to Church, and as soon as it can grasp religious doctrines will explain to it that the Holy Child of Bethlehem, the Child Whom it sees on Mary's arm, is hidden in the Tabernacle. The influence of such early teaching is beautifully and strikingly illustrated in the pretty little story of the child who hearing of the Christ Child being there, one day, when alone in the Church, climbed upon the altar, gently knocked at the Tabernacle door and asked: "Dear little Jesus, are You there?"

THE SOLEMN CONSECRATION OF YOUTH

All this is a remote preparation for the *great* event of childhood: the *First Communion*, the solemn consecration to the Eucharistic Savior. The Christian life followed at the outset!

The impression of the special instructions for that great event, the emphasis on its sacredness, the purifying and ennobling influences of these doctrines, and the acts

of adoration, thanksgiving, love, the petitions for all requirements, spiritual and even temporal, taught to the children, are, indeed, contributing and effective forces to the hallowing of the young Christian Life.

Then the great event itself. The Church makes it like the first Mass of a new priest, a great public event. In the old world, village festivals and village decorations are the practice. Often the children, dressed and adorned as for a wedding, are led in solemn procession through the village, accompanied by parents, relatives and friends. It is the spiritual espousal of the child's soul to Him Who is the Friend and Lover of Children.

Truly, this is a repetition, a dramatic re-enactment, of that touching scene of the Gospel: Little Ones brought to Christ, to receive His blessing! With the same exultant joy that the mothers of Judea brought their children to the living Christ, Christian mothers bring their children to Christ in the Tabernacle.

After this the frequent reception of Holy Communion. When we see children kneeling before and receiving the Blessed Sacrament, are we not reminded of another instance in the life of Christ, one that gave especial pleasure to His loving heart? When on that first Palm Sunday the multitudes were cowed and silenced by the Pharisees and ceased to longer sing the Hosannah, the children continued. No frown of Pharisees could stop them. "Hosannah to the son of David," they cried, though the voices of the Elders had died out. The chief priests and scribes were moved to indignation, and turning to Christ said to Him, "Hearest Thou what these say?" And Jesus answered them, quoting from the Psalms they well knew, "Yea, have you never read, 'Out of the mouths of infants and sucklings thou hast perfected praise'?" (Matt. xxi. 16.)

"Out of the mouths of infants thou hast prepared perfect worship." So we may render the words of the Psalmist quoted by Our Lord.

THE DANGERS OF YOUTH

The child's psychology! The dangers of childhood and youth. First and foremost, the many, ever-increasing evil allurements. A necessary antidote is essential: sacramental grace, in the first place; but also, in the second,

those psychological effects of which we have been speaking. What *salutary restraints*, the very thought of Communion received in the morning, or to be received next day!

And we all know in what sphere childhood and youth need most self-discipline and self-control. I cannot express it better than by quoting the beautiful words of Cardinal Newman:

It is the boast of the Catholic religion that it has the gift to make the young heart chaste. And why is this! It gives us Jesus as food and Mary as our nursing mother.

What profound psychology in this expression of the great English Cardinal!

A recently published poem entitled "Give Her a Torch" was accompanied with an illustration of the poet's idea,—a young girl leaving home for the outer life beyond the family hearthstone. She appeared overwhelmed trying to read the future, wondering where her strength would come from, as she realized that her life was taking on new strangeness and uncertainties. How is she to know the safe way to walk? The poet's plea was, *to give her a torch*, give her something to light the way; give her a torch so she shall walk safely; give her a torch so she shall not try to wear the white robe of her innocence into places where it shall become soiled.

The Catholic youth possesses more than a torch,—a *living, inspiring, protecting* companion; it is the Holy Eucharist. She knows she is not alone, however far her weary feet may carry her; wherever she may wander she will find a home, a spiritual home,—the Tabernacle. Oh, the Hallowing power of the Holy Eucharist to the burdened, lonely, and breaking heart—it is the vision of God!

THE DESIRES OF YOUTH

The child's psychology! The child needs and desires faith. It is the very foundation of all education. And here faith in the great mystery of religion! Do not say the child does not understand, as the rigorists of old said, to excuse the long delay of First Communion.

"How do you believe?" asked the great American actress of Gladstone.

"As a child," was the answer of that learned and subtle statesman. Do not these words remind us of "and a little child shall lead them"?

Indeed, there is an appealing interest to children in the mysteries of life. What matters if they do not comprehend all? The child perceives with the dim sense of childhood the majesty and beauty of the act and grasps two great truths,—God is sovereign, and God is good. Who will confess that youth has no need for such a creed? That the nation does not demand it? That humanity does not require it?

Shall our youths know merely the things "that savor of the sod"? The Church does not teach the child to denounce the world, its pleasures, its tasks, its triumphs; nor to denounce science, art, success, wealth, but she teaches the child that they are useless when they do not lead to God,—mere fragments of truth, disjointed from the main purpose of creation. The Church for two thousand years has stood adamant against the world's materialistic philosophy. Her troubles—largely the result of her unyielding opposition. Her glory—that she has never cringed to it.

THE NEEDS OF YOUTH

The child's psychology! Childhood and youth need reverence and affection. Alas, the former is fast disappearing. What a wonderful school of reverence in the belief in the Blessed Sacrament, in the devotion to and the frequent reception of this most august and sublime Sacrament! What a source of the deepest and purest and sublimest affection in this, the Sacrament of Love! Though neither child nor adult can fathom the mystery of this Sacrament, yet all, and perhaps particularly the child, will be impressed by the love manifested in it: the Savior hidden in the Tabernacle.

Childhood and youth needs lessons in obedience to law and authority, in our day perhaps more than ever.

Much discussion has taken place recently in America over the crime problem,—how to solve it by methods of suppression and punishment has been widely debated. Society's young derelicts develop from the environment, from the homes where laxity and indifference reign, from

the absence of moral influences in the early years of life. To create character something besides mere laws and force are necessary. The qualities that make for a good citizen come from within,—from the soul. For these reasons, no child can afford to grow to manhood without spiritual training.

The vast majority of the youths of America are not being trained in any way, according to statistics, by the religious program of any church. "The hungry lambs look up but are not fed." Spiritual poverty is the crime that begets crime. Social service work and social welfare legislation will be ineffective unless we also eradicate spiritual illiteracy. What an antidote against those evil tendencies, what a wonderful source of true spiritual wealth, protection and inspiration in the early and frequent reception of Holy Eucharist throughout the years of adolescence! Thus is the Christ's life in its relation to civil and divine law and authority hallowed at the outset by the Holy Eucharist.

Childhood and youth needs the lesson of gratitude. Alas, many children never learn it, to the deep regret of parents. The very name *Eucharist* means thanksgiving and gratitude. Children are taught to make special thanksgiving after Communion, to pour out their full hearts to God. Must not this produce a sense of gratitude to all to whom thanks are due for kindness and service?

THE HOLY EUCHARIST'S GIFTS

What does the Catholic Church demand for the child? The Catholic Church insists that the child be given Life, Light, Love—the Holy Eucharist's gifts to the soul of man.

Life. What life? Not the life that is killed with the world's toil and fret; that is smothered with the things of the earth that men seek to possess; but the life that makes one sharer in the life of God, in the life of everlasting happiness.

Light. What light? Not of this world, but the light that shines through the "world's black shadow of care and doubt and sin"; the light that does not fail; the light that finds the pathway from the lone Tabernacle here below to the City Beautiful on the distant hills.

Love! What love? Not the love that is weighed and

measured; nor the love that ends with the setting sun of each earthly friend. Not the love which counts the cost, but love that is eternal, God's love—forever and ever and ever.

THE EUCHARISTIC SCHOOL

Oh, yes, there is another school for the child, the Eucharistic School! A most sublime school of will and heart, a power for instilling finer, nobler feelings and heroic resolutions! A school in which the child is given the weapons of God.

And what beauty, spiritual beauty in it! Behold children kneeling before the altar! Truly the *Eucharistic devotions of children are the most fragrant altar flowers!*

And what blessed results! Saints and sinners speak of their First Communion childhood recollections with a lingering feeling of love and joy. Few days in life compare with the interest and enthusiasm which it has always had for the Catholic heart. Even those who had become indifferent, still speak of the First Communion with affection, as it is related Napoleon did when he referred to it toward the end of his life as the happiest day of his eventful career.

A child's simple Christ-like love of Christ in the Tabernacle has softened the heart of many a hardened parent and aroused the deepest spirituality in the environment alike of the cottage kitchen and the royal throne-room. "And a little child shall lead them!"

How the Christian emotions are stirred at the sight of children at First Communion! What ceremony, laden with a wealth of symbols, the Mass, the music of children's voices, the neatly and manly clad boys, the wreathed and veil-bedecked girls, more inspire the heart and captivate the soul of the elders who witness it?

God never seems so near the earth, never so close to our homes, never so real in the Church; the sanctuary never seems so illuminated, the priest more divine, Heaven so near, as on that morning when the little children first receive His Sacrament of Love. Is it any wonder that brave, stout-hearted priests have confessed their inability to keep back the tears as they unlocked the Tabernacle door, turned, and went down the altar steps to give the

Bread of Life for the first time to the little lambs of his flock?

To Catholics, the world over, whether living under the shadow of St. Peter's in Rome, in the jungles of Africa, or in rude huts in the Arctic Circle, the Prisoner of the Tabernacle is the hallowing influence on life, the influence that grows with years and never can pass away. As the flame leaps upward by a hidden law of nature to its fountain in the sun, the source of heat, light and life, so the Holy Eucharist lifts the soul to God, its Creator, makes the child share in the life of God.

THE SOURCE OF TRUE JOY

Fittingly has the Church placed among the very first prayers of the Mass, and most appropriately has my Alma Mater inscribed over the portals of her Students' Memorial Chapel the words that may well be written on the arch of every shrine where youths worship: "I will go in, unto the Altar of God, to God Who giveth joy to my youth."

Joy! Where is the source of true joy? The Holy Eucharist, the supreme source of life and strength; a vision of joy to all,—to the angels in Heaven, to man on earth, and a daily fountain of joy to the child himself.

"God, Who giveth joy to my youth!" In these words we have the Divine promise,—a consecrated joy such as the world cannot give, a joy which endures through the darkest and saddest years of life, a joy which will be converted into the happiness of the everlasting springtime of life!